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ABSTRACT

This "issue report" contains three articles centered around the concept of "social capital", and the role of the schools in community revitalization. "Social captial" consists of organizational networks of communication and shared values that provide collective support for adults and youth in a community. In "Social Capital and the Rebuilding of Communities," Gary G. Wehlage offers a more complete definition of social capital, showing its importance to a productive adult life and to the education of youth. "Community Partnerships Bring Community Revitalization," by Karen Prager, and an interview with Carlos Azcoitia, principal of John Spry Community School of Chicago, provide information on actual school-community projects. In Surrey County, Virginia, citizens have worked for 25 years to improve schools an other public facilities, stimulated by the National Association of Southern Poor. In Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania and other institutions have established cooperative ventures to enhance social services, such as the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC). In Chicago, an elementary school principal has convinced churches, clubs, and other community organizations to support the school. (LMI)

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ED 363 953

Issues in restructuring schools

Community Partnerships Bring Community Revitalization

by Karen Prager

Across the United States citizens have banded together to revitalize their neighborhoods. For example, in one area police now patrol on bikes because violent crime is in check. In another, citizen patrols work at night to keep a neighborhood safe. We report here on two efforts at community revitalization. One 25-year-old effort, in a rural community in the south, shows indicators of remarkable success. Another nascent undertaking is still finding its footing after eight years of uncertain development.

Partnerships in the rural south: Surry County

It used to be called Sorry County. A small, quaint tidewater community, set deep in rural Virginia, Surry used to be distinguished by its failures. By all accounts of the late 1960's and early 1970's, racism was rampant. The county claimed no medical facilities; one physician served 6,200 residents. Public recreational facilities did not exist. Save one janitorial slot, all working African-Americans were either farmers or employed outside the county. The public schools were abandoned by white children and failed most black ones. Per pupil spending was $169 per year; classrooms averaged 50 students. With the longest school year in the state, Surry had the lowest achievement scores. Students ranked at the 17th percentile nationally. The drop out rate was 18%. Many teachers worked without certification. In the black high school, which had neither gym, nor cafeteria, nor useable yard, the roof welcomed rain.

Today a new County Health Clinic employs three physicians and 12 medical specialists. A new recreational center serves seniors, provides youth programs, and houses local events. Crime has virtually disappeared in Surry: There were six robberies in the last 10 years. The jail closed. In the public schools, per pupil spending is $6,500 per year, and classrooms relish a 17-to-1 student-teacher ratio. Children from kindergarten to 12th grade test well above the national average. Nearly 70% of Surry teachers hold master's degrees. The drop out rate is 1.7%, lowest in the state. Surry leads the state in students furthering their education: 90% of the graduates go on to college.

What accounts for the success? One place to begin the story is in the mid-1960's.

At that time, Surry was like a caldron of incidents brewing anger. Schools were segregated. School conditions were atrocious, says citizen activist, C.C. Pettaway, then shipyard worker and PTA president. Pettaway still has pictures he took the year he first asked the school board for help. "Light fixtures were off the walls, plates off the light switches, some with wires hanging out. Children could go by with a pen or rod and

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. . . social capital consists of adult organizational networks of communication and shared values that provide collective support for adults and youth in a community.

Educators working to restructure schools face increasing numbers of students unable to concentrate and unwilling to study diligently, because they have no hope that success in school will lead to a better life. These students are often deprived of basic material needs—food, clothing, shelter, health care, and most importantly, of emotional bonding to adults in the community who nurture trust, hope, and the self-confidence needed to develop intellectual and social competence.

Traditionally these forms of support for children have been provided by families, adult friends, and the social, religious, and political organizations of neighborhoods and small communities. Increasingly, however, middle-class flight, a disintegrating economic base, deteriorating housing stock, and a general loss of stable institutions have weakened the ability of many urban neighborhoods to sustain constructive family life, voluntary institutions and the political capability required for long-term, continuous school reform. The problem seems most dramatic in urban areas, but recent investigations into the condition of children in the United States show serious problems in diverse locations and social groups.

Human resources that support children can be considered social capital when the resources are used to enable individual and collective growth. Social capital is grounded in adults with the commitment, competence, and resources to care for children. But most importantly, social capital consists of adult organizational networks of communication and shared values that provide collective support for adults and youth in a community. The organizational networks must offer opportunities to develop both formal and informal institutions that identify and solve collective problems. These may range from recreational card games and bowling leagues to child care centers and drug rehabilitation programs.

The role of school restructuring in the rebuilding of social capital is unclear, but it is clear that education for many students will not improve substantially without advances in the social capital of their communities. This *issue report* begins to examine the issue. Gary Wehlage offers a more complete definition of social capital, showing its importance to productive adult life and to the education of youth. Karen Prager reports projects in three communities that illustrate efforts and problems in building social capital. In Surry County, Virginia citizens have worked for 25 years to improve schools and other public facilities, stimulated by the National Association of Southern Poor. In Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania and a variety of other institutions have established cooperative ventures to enhance social services. In Chicago, an elementary school principal has convinced churches, clubs, and other community organizations to support the school.

In none of these situations do participants use the language of "social capital" to direct their work, and some have been more successful than others in building stable organizational networks that communicate shared values and that empower local communities to help their youth to succeed. The cases illustrate that disparate efforts of churches, action organizations, social service agencies, unions, and businesses have attacked parts of the problem. Other education projects have launched major efforts to enhance parental involvement in schooling and to coordinate social and health services in the school. In general, however, both education reform and social welfare policy have failed to address the decline of social capital in American communities. There are no clear or easy solutions, and schools cannot assume the bulk of responsibility for solving this problem. We hope this report will stimulate discussion about how to connect school restructuring to social capital development in their surrounding communities.

by Fred M. Newmann
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Social Capital and the Rebuilding of Communities

By Gary G. Wehlage

In the absence of social capital, children are growing up without strong connections to adults and adult values and institutions. Aimless, normless, and increasingly violence-prone youth are the product.

Social capital theory, originally developed by sociologist James Coleman (1987a; 1987b; 1988), helps explain how certain characteristics of families, neighborhoods and communities affect student success in school. Coleman identifies three kinds of capital that people possess in varying amounts. One is financial capital; i.e., money and equipment that money can buy to produce goods and services. A second form of capital is human; this refers to skills and knowledge (often acquired through formal education) that allow people to act in purposeful ways, including to earn a living. The third form, social capital, describes the kinds of organizational relationships among people that facilitate collective action.

Social capital is not an individual possession like the first two, but rather it provides the framework of social relationships built upon obligations and expectations. Social capital creates a flow of information containing norms that establish a trustworthy, predictable context for organized activity.

Coleman presents several examples of social capital that illustrate how it functions to promote collective action. One example he offers (Coleman, 1988) is the rotating-credit association common in Southeast Asia. These associations are informal groups comprised of friends, relatives and neighbors who meet regularly to contribute to and draw upon a central fund of money. The fund is created by member contributions. The relationship among the members of the association is built on the explicit obligation to contribute along with the expectation that one's turn will come to use the pool of money. Ultimately the association rests on a shared trust, namely that no one will abscond with the money. Coleman (1988) observes, "One could not imagine a rotating-credit association operating successfully in urban areas marked by a high degree of social disorganization—or, in other words, by a lack of social capital."

The credit association example is particularly instructive because it illustrates some of the differences among financial, human and social capital. The association accumulates financial capital which in turn is used by members whose human capital (skills and knowledge) permit them to go into business and to produce goods or services. Without the social capital of the credit association, however, the other two forms of capital could not be organized and acted upon. While each individual member possesses some financial and human capital, social capital is produced by a collective organization based on shared norms, obligations and information.

The distinction between human capital and social capital is important. The former consists of the knowledge and skills acquired by individuals that are necessary for individual development. Social capital, however, resides in groups as a result of organized, collective effort. Social capital provides the advantage of organizing individuals to carry out some agreed upon purpose that they could not do alone, or at least not do nearly as well. Key elements of social capital are shared attitudes, norms and values that promote trust and common expectations. While individuals possess these attributes, they become powerful only when individuals connect with one another. While not directly observable, social capital is evident when families, groups, or communities organize to act. The observable activities to achieve social goals, such as financing a business, improving a local school and providing for the support and rearing of children through health, recreation and day care programs. Any collective social action, such as a group of mothers organizing a crossing guard program for their school, generates social capital.

Social capital functions within families as well as larger groups. Families have more or less social capital based on the relations among members that communicate expectations, norms, sanctions to produce purposeful activity. Within-family social capital is developed largely through informal social relationships that occur between parents and their children.

When a network of families share a set of expectations, norms and sanctions, then, Coleman argues, "intergenerational closure" tends to occur. For example, if parents are friends of the parents of their children's friends, a network of social relations exists which promotes a flow of information. When whole sets of families interact, it becomes more likely that parents and children share norms, expectations and the consistent use of sanctions. In contrast, when a parent does not have close relationships with other parents or community members who share expectations and norms, the openness of this situation leads to uncertainty for behavior and inconsistent use of sanctions.

In some cases, whole communities develop intergenerational closure around a set of shared norms and expectations. Such closure is a product of organized experiences that place youth in frequent contact and communication with adults. When intergenerational closure occurs especially strong social capital results.

Some readers may assume that children from higher social class families will necessarily benefit from more social capital, but this does not follow. Conventional definitions of social class are based on how much financial and human capital a person possesses. The more wealth and/or education the higher the social class one attains. Ironically, some people with relatively large amounts of human and/or financial capital do not develop social capital within their own families because strong social relationships between adults and children are absent. Weak social capital in any family tends to result in unclear norms that permit inconsistent behaviors and sanctions.

The lack of strong social relations within a family can result from several circumstances. For example, it is possible for well-educated, affluent professionals to tolerate homes where their children's lives are dominated by TV and mindless peer activity. The absence of formal and informal adult organization in the family and neighborhood leads to weak intergenerational communication of norms and constructive role models. Thus even for more affluent children, the consequence of weak social capital is a lack of connection to the adult world of organized, purposeful activity.

In general, all segments of contemporary society—the more affluent as well as the poor—reflect increasing adult neglect of children. Parents can fail to give sufficient time to their children for several reasons including lack of personal commitment and excessive work obligations. Weak social capital in the family often results in strengthening youth's allegiance to peer groups and their culture rather than espoused adult values and behaviors.

One source of weak social capital is found in single-parent homes. Such homes typically provide a reduced level of interactions between children and

Many urban areas now have a much reduced stock of social capital, but pockets of it are still present and can be built upon.

adults because of one less adult and because children experience less adult-to-adult interaction. Coleman (Coleman and Hoffer, 1989) points out, however, that to some extent the social capital of the community can substitute for its absence in families. He states, "For example, children from single-parent families are more like their two-parent counterparts in both achievement and in continuation in school when schools are in communities with extensive social capital." Such communities provide youth with social capital through churches, youth groups, recreation programs, certain kinds of work experience, and extended families.

While affluence and education may provide families with greater opportunities for developing strong social capital, as pointed out above, there is no consistent relationship. Less affluent families can have strong social capital. For example, adults in a poor rural community, where other forms of capital are in short supply, may be tightly organized and provide intergenerational closure through the local 4-H club, schools, churches and the face-to-face nature of community life. Such communities can vigilantly look after the welfare and raising of their children. Perhaps the corner gas station owner may notice a young person of school age on the street during the day and call the principal to report the matter. By making the call, the gas station owner acts on shared norms and expectations about his responsibility to support the school and to sanction school-skipping by a youthful member of the community.

Many urban areas now have a much reduced stock of social capital, but pockets of it are still present and can be built upon. Inner-city churches, particularly those serving African-American communities, appear to provide organization to people's lives as well as spiritual support. On the other hand, gangs, too, fill a vacuum in many neighborhoods and develop social capital within their organizations.

Based on years of participant observations, Jankowski (1991) describes in detail how gangs organize themselves to carry out their activities such as self-defense and selling drugs. Gangs have developed what Jankowski calls "social codes" (norms) in order to maintain group control. He found that gangs also employ an "ideology" to provide members with a picture of the world that explains how society functions and creates a set of moral principles to solidify the group. Gangs have rules and expectations about members' behavior toward each other as well as how to respond to other gangs and to function in relation to the larger community. The social capital of gangs has allowed them to pursue illicit ends in much the same way as legitimate groups in society pursue more socially redeeming goals.

In pre-modern times, when life was organized around extended families and close knit communities, social capital was a "natural" if invisible part of the community landscape. There was no apparent need for organizations or governments to plan deliberately to cultivate social capital. Now, however, as the breakdown of traditional social institutions and networks threatens the very fabric of organized social life, social capital becomes a critical issue for public policy. The public and policy-makers are now faced with the problem of how to help families and neighborhoods develop social capital because its development ultimately underlies the readiness and willingness of children to acquire human capital through formal education. In the absence of social capital, children are growing up without strong connections to adults and adult values and institutions. Aimless, normless, and increasingly violence-prone youth are the product.

The challenge to modern society is to help people build social capital within their families and in the neighborhoods where youth spend much of their time. The task can be seen as occurring on two levels—adult and child. Adults must have social capital in order to help

children develop it. Building social capital among adults is essential to provide intergenerational communication of norms and expectations. Adults can develop social capital for their own purposes, but they must also make sure that child-rearing institutions are built to support children. Adults already participating extensively in organized social and economic life can become role models and help establish and reinforce values that inspire youth to study and work toward participation in socially constructive activities.

Given the current stress on family life, new mechanisms are needed to build social capital. Social capital development must take place within families and neighborhoods, and for maximal benefit families and neighborhoods should be connected to the social capital of the larger community. This means that adults must make sure that children participate in important forms of organized activity beyond the home through the primary institutions of school, work and cultural life.

How can public policy address the issue of social capital development? The answer is not at all clear. However, one line of thinking suggests that many of the resources now going into welfare, social services and various forms of remediation could be turned toward efforts at building social capital. A fundamental problem of such policy is how to transform the maze of public and private agencies and their professionals—now oriented primarily to the delivery of human services to individual clients—into a system that aims more toward the building of organizations that strengthen social capital in families and neighborhoods. Currently, social services have an individualistic, even contractual, relation with "clients" who receive specified categorical services. This contractual relationship, according to critics, creates dependency on the part of the client who must look to an institution for help rather than developing the ability to work with others in some form of collective self-help.

The school is one institution that can help create conditions that will facilitate the development of social capital in neighborhoods devastated by the flight of business, basic services and the educated. This point of view is captured by Wilensky and Kline (1988) who, after a review of urban school reform strategies, conclude that the crisis of urban education is found in the demise of community. "(T)he solution for schools and communities alike lies in renewing the school-community link and creating programs and institutions that address the vital needs of young people and the adults they live with."

We are aware of no community that has used the social capital framework explicitly as a basis for public policy or institution building. We urge community leaders, educators and policymakers to consider it and to speculate about what efforts might contribute to building social capital. The following organizational efforts would seem to have potential: establishing day care centers around the participation of local neighborhood residents; creating new forms of apprenticeship for youth through the rehabilitation of neighborhood housing and public facilities such as playgrounds and sports facilities; establishing parent-run education centers where various kinds of training, literacy programs and support groups are offered; training and financially supporting entrepreneurs wanting to develop small businesses; developing neighborhood run sports, music, drama and other recreational programs; organizing neighborhood security and safety patrols; establishing neighborhood health clinics and counseling centers.

While some communities may have undertaken one or more of these projects, a systematic and policy-driven agenda of the kind laid out here has not been forthcoming (Stone and Wehlage, in press).

Some communities are beginning to experiment with "community collaboratives" that coalesce a wide range of public and private organizations with the intent to create local youth policy (Melaville and Blank, 1993). These community collaboratives have the potential for undertaking the broad agenda of social capital development, but for the most part they have focused on such issues as identifying problems, quantifying the extent of these problems, coordinating and enhancing social services, promoting school reform and establishing school-business compacts. All of these efforts are important, but the more fundamental problem of social capital disintegration remains unaddressed in any systematic way.

Social capital theory forces the question, how can public policy help strengthen the social capital that is essential for promoting individual school achievement, family and neighborhood stability and economic productivity? In the remainder of this issue report, we explore how three communities and their schools have attempted this new and fundamental task.

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Carlos Azcoitia

Principal, John Spry Community School

photo by Craig R. Skerlburg, Chicago, IL

Carlos Azcoitia is at home in the Hispanic community surrounding John Spry Community School in Chicago. Of Cuban birth, Azcoitia received his bachelor's degree at the University of Puerto Rico, master's at National Louis University, and his doctorate at Northern Illinois University. A seventh and eighth grade teacher at the start of his career, Azcoitia later became a director of student support services in career and vocational education. Azcoitia sought to become principal of Spry because he felt collaborating with Local School Councils (LSC) and forming a team approach to education would result in a "major source of empowerment for the community."

Like many Chicago schools, Spry is located in an area fraught with problems of inner city poverty. But Azcoitia is optimistic. Instead of reacting to emergencies on a crisis basis, he says, *"We can address problems through a coordinated approach. Capitalize on adults and students who really want to make a difference. Organize them. Connect them to community institutions. And also, provide options for students not involved meaningfully in these activities. I don't want to assume total responsibility for this, but I do want to facilitate these connections. And I think some of these things are happening."*

Azcoitia came to Spry in July, 1990 and began working with the LSC, comprised of the principal, six parents, two community residents, and two teachers. *"It all started as people came to the meetings to address safety concerns in the community."*

At meetings, the residents described gang involvement, congregations of people, and suspected drug dealing. These activities occurred in blocks around the school. In response, the Council created a safety subcommittee, which scheduled monthly meetings with the Neighborhood Relations Committee of the police department.

Their efforts have brought evictions to undesirable neighbors. *"Once we identify the owners of a building, per police request, the owners work with the police to evict tenants involved in illegal activities. We've had a case where an apartment was rented by a minor and friends congregated late at night. We identified the owner, and the boy was evicted. We've had police, Spry students, and high school students cover graffiti, then distribute flyers to owners that tell them it's their responsibility to remove symbols that intimidate other residents.*

"These are the kinds of things we see when people organize and act. By monitoring police intervention, we create an accountability system. In the past you might have people working independently. When they call the police, the police does not always respond. Now police meet with us every month. Now if police don't respond to someone's call, residents can call the school or the principal. We are getting everybody involved and coordinated. Soon we began

by Karen Prager

to see progress in the immediate blocks surrounding the school."

Then other neighbors came from other blocks, and asked if the safety area could be expanded. *"In fact, we have a new council member who joined with an interest of improving her block because she had seen the police cooperation we enjoy. Once you start this, it continues and grows."*

The LSC collaborated with Azcoitia to consider the best way to implement a program of neighborhood revitalization. *"We wanted to stress that for continuity we not only have to be involved in what happens inside our buildings, but what happens outside."*

Azcoitia approached neighbors and community institutions surrounding Spry for assistance. Their first victory was the take-over of an abandoned lot across from the school. *"It used to be a place with problems, abandoned cars, bottles, gang hang out. Well, the lot was turned it into a community play lot, fenced in, and one of the neighborhood residents has been authorized to open and close it."*

He also contacted the Boys and Girls Club, located next door to the school, which operates after school recreational programs. The building provided the vehicle to expand educational programs to entering kindergartners. *"We found that the Boys and Girls Club did not use their facility to the maximum in the morning, so we leased a couple of rooms and now offer full day kindergarten to our six kindergarten classrooms. Before it was half day.*

"We are also opened to 5:15, which unlocks a lot of doors for us. For example, this school, which is overcrowded, didn't have the space to offer a preschool program. Now we offer one after school. K-8 students are dismissed at 2:30; our preschool program starts at 2:45. We were funding this out of our own discretionary budget. Now the funding has been picked up by the State Board of Education—we've been after them now for three years. That now permits us to use that money for something else. We also offer a lot of academic and recreational activities after school: different clubs, classes for parents, and academic programs for remedial and gifted education.

"Plus, last year we wanted to open different neighborhood schools on Saturday. Take turns; bring students from different schools together. We are all in the little village community, and yet sometimes you have students who might be 10 or 15 blocks away from here, and there is no relationship there. This is a way of dealing with this type of antagonism created by students of different neighborhoods, or gangs. Whatever you want to call it. So we took turns in opening on Saturdays, and targeted different ages.

"Every student who came to school on Saturday had to come with a parent, either 2 or 1. Once they came here we had a general session, then we broke them up. Parents would attend workshops for parents, students went to other activities. In some instances we united them to attend the same workshop together.

"This year, we're taking field trips on Saturday mornings. Getting on buses and, with students and families from different school communities and attend universities, museums, the zoo. Attendance has varied from one bus load of families to five or six."

Spry has been able to get community funding for this project from three sources: Schools United for Better Education, the First National Bank of Chicago, and the United Neighborhood Organization.

Azcoitia explains that there is a difference between parent involvement which supports specific school activities and parents working for broader community development. *"We have 20 parent volunteers who live around here and work in the classrooms and teacher resource center. Now they connect the school experience with their children's education and the quality of life where they live. We want to create the kind of change that lets people see the connection. It is obvious that what so many communities have done for so long has not proven to be effective. So we want to organize it differently, help them see how they can play a role in neighborhood improvement. We've taken the responsibility in a broader issue, one that includes neighborhood. In every council meeting we bring a community focus."*

Azcoitia's community-minded approach also aims to involve students after they leave eighth grade. *"How do we continue to establish communication with them?"* he asks, then answers. *"We want to connect with the neighborhood high school to include them. Everybody lives in the community, so we want to develop some kind of continuity once they leave here."*

A number of measures have helped facilitate that continuity. For one, Spry joined the Chicago Cluster Initiative, elementary schools working together that feed into the community high school. *"The idea is to start working with students now, getting them organized. We also get teachers to work together with staff development activities coming from different communities—since you're talking about merging a community that is predominately Hispanic with one that is African-American."*

In another initiative, Spry formed a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to engage in joint community service projects. *"In the summer we've done three or four endeavors. We take different blocks and we paint different buildings, cover graffiti, and clean the streets."*

For the most part, students who do service projects tend to be positive role models, Azcoitia says. He reasoned that the more disengaged students might benefit from associating with more conforming ones. Thus students who misbehave can avoid suspensions by doing community service.

"One of the first things we developed for the school was an after-school discipline program. Parents are asked to sign and agree to certain measures so we can avoid suspensions. Students who do not follow our contract spend some time after school, or Saturday mornings and include community service. We wanted to stay away from suspensions which have been the traditional approach.

"There were 1,580 students here when I arrived, and there was no discipline program in place. What would be an effective program with 42 students per class? Just get rid of them! But if you just suspend students, what will that do to their achievement when they return to school?

"To bring this off we had training sessions for teachers. We wanted to connect discipline to instruction, reduce class size, create alternatives. Not that we don't suspend anyone; it is an option that's there. But first we use the after-school discipline program, and if it doesn't work we go to Saturday morning. Students go to the social center at the neighborhood church and give out food and clothing for needy. But we don't want to tie that only into discipline. We want to show more positively how people can help one another. It's not just a discipline program, but part of citizenship for this community."

Azcoitia has connected to other local agencies to rebuild the community. *"We joined with The Latino Youth agency, which has a training program for older students and adults because they provide alcohol and drug prevention workshops for schools. They also have a safety committee which concentrates on the Boulevard where our school is situated. We've done beautification projects with them. They come as a resource to our school offering parent training programs.*

"Another vital partner is our church and its private school. A large majority of families here attend Sunday service at Catholic churches. And they do have their bulletins, during their presentations, we do tell them what things are happening here, whether it's a health caravan at the parking lot, or the school is open Saturday or a community service project. And we paired up with community service projects together with students from both schools."

Among the problems that plague inner city schools, Azcoitia is particularly concerned with student mobility.

"One of the things that we wanted to reduce is the transiency rate with our residents. We had a mobility rate here of 60%! And we have been able to reduce that little by little because we have a constant campaign: Don't Move During the School Year! If you need to move do it in the summer. Don't interrupt the school year! Don't take family vacations!

"Most of our families are workers and have different vacation schedules. Sometimes they disappear for three and four weeks, go to Mexico to see relatives. Well, we've had a constant campaign in every LSC meeting, in every parent meeting, in every parent room.

"We tell them that what happens in such a congested community is that if you move out we might need to find another placement when you return. Someone else could have taken your place. We use different strategies, and it is having something of an impact. Mobility is now at 38%."

Enlisting all this community support offers a strong, necessary base for student education, but Azcoitia realizes that schools cannot ignore the specifics of curriculum, teaching, and learning in the school.

"Another thing we wanted to do is restructure our day. We now have a high school teacher who comes here from 7:30 and teaches an algebra class to eighth graders. Another thing, we started the concept of a Spry Junior High for our upper graders. We opened a science lab and started to teach geometry through computers. That group of teachers has not evolved completely in a school-within-a-school approach. But it is moving in that direction.

"This past summer we did some staff development. With funding from the Field Foundation and a partnership with the Mexican Fine Arts museum, a group of teachers are going to start a school-within-a-school which integrates the arts and different subject matter. The program will go from K-8, because we have interested teachers across the grade levels. In a school this big, I think it is also important to address the instructional component and teachers leadership roles. We need to move in that direction, too."

"Here is where we see the connection between instruction and the quality of life in our community contribute to the achievement of our students."

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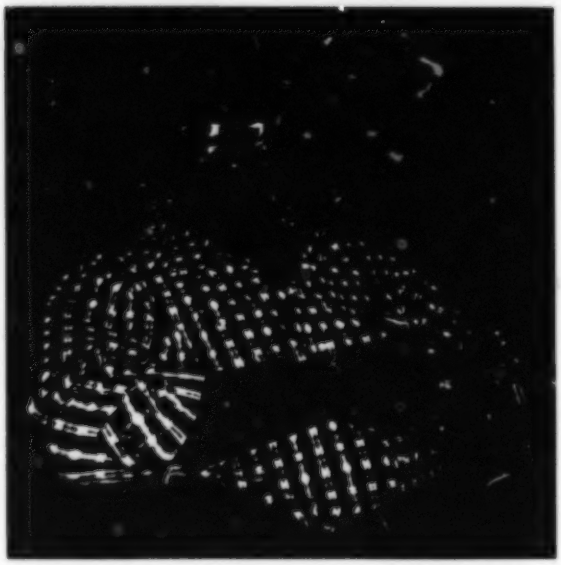
electrocute themselves." The school board ignored the pleas. Later that year, Pettaway petitioned the school board for grass seed and fill dirt to make the high school field useable for sports. The PTA volunteered to do the work. The school board president balked. She said blacks asked for too much. The petition, signed by 350 county people despite their fear of reprisal, was flatly rejected.

According to Pettaway the white high school, "Had everything!" a cafeteria, an assembly, a field. Pettaway applied to send his four children to the white school. It became another petition denied. The request led to a law suit, litigated by the NAACP. Avis Pettaway versus the Surry Board of Education. Pettaway won the suit that spring. By fall, the white high school closed for lack of enrollment. Why? All white students but six transferred to the private academy in neighboring in Sussex County.

In the mid-1960's, black residents were warned against engaging in any political activity or cooperating with activists. "You spend time with Pettaway, it's not going to be like it was with you-all," Pettaway remembers residents reporting. "I was infringing on their rights. 'I won't be able to use the master's tractor or use the master's pick-up truck.' " Black families had been borrowing such farm equipment from whites since Reconstruction. White control extended to elections; $10 was the standard fee to buy a black ballot. Remember, only since 1964 has federal legislation guaranteed blacks the right to vote by prohibiting racial discrimination in voter registration and elections.

In Surry County the key political unit is a Board of Supervisors that governs the county consisting of three towns. The 5-member county board, which appoints the Board of Education, represents a population of 6,200 that has been constant since Surry was founded in 1652. Throughout its history both boards have been dominated by whites, although the population has been 65% black for generations.

By 1967, African-American leaders had failed to elect even one black member to the county's controlling board. After losing an election by 32 votes, Pettaway recalls, "We weren't getting anything done. People called my house and said, 'Pettaway, I'm through. Hard as we work, we come up losing by 32 votes.' I said, 'Well, you may have a point man. But a winner don't quit. And a quitter don't win. If we quit, we not going to win. That's what the powers that be want us to do. Let's pick up the broken pieces, put them back together.' "



CC *Pettaway relaxes during an interview in the former school building his children were not allowed to attend.*

In 1968, Don Anderson, a Washington D.C. lawyer who helped draft civil rights legislation and initiate Head Start, created the National Association for Southern Poor (NASP). The alliance, based on Jeffersonian principles of self governance, sought to help organize under-represented citizens throughout the "Black Belt" of the South.

NASP's underlying principle is that the poor need to create networks of community people who define their own needs and find their own solutions, rather than taking hand outs from programs and services set up by distant bureaucrats or professionals. To accomplish this, the NASP creates indigenous assemblies. The assembly offers an organized structure similar to a legislature which enables people to bring community and individual problems and preferred solutions to elected leaders.

"Organization is the key to power and economics, a means of taking the final steps out of our past," explains Anderson. "You can't have self help unless there is some means of collective decision-making. That is where I believe most anti-poverty efforts fall short. They begin with a program, and not a structure or organization. That means that someone outside the county came up with a program."

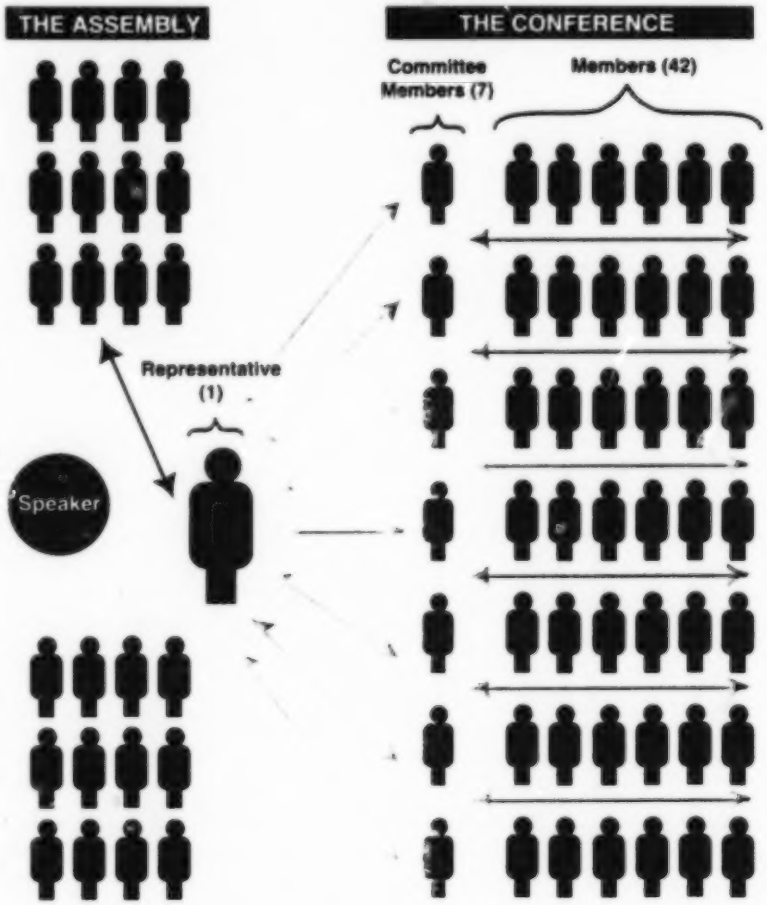
To hear his ideas, the county's most influential black leaders met Anderson in a funeral home 100 miles from Surry. But no one was interested in organizing. "There was factionalism," says Anderson. "Black leaders were fighting with each other."

The next three years were difficult. Meetings were held infrequently, and only six or seven people would attend. "There were lots of disagreements over the course to pursue," says Anderson. "This didn't develop overnight."

In the spring of 1971, blacks, sickened by the school system, called a strike. They refused to send their children to school until some changes were made. The strike lasted 18 days, but made no impression on the Board of Education. "The black leadership was angry. There was talk about violence at the meeting that night," recalls Anderson. Then, at one point, they turned to him and said, "Let's try this thing."

The black leadership organized the county very quickly. Pettaway became the first president of the Surry

How the Assembly Works



How the Assembly Works [1]

Communities of registered voters are organized into "conferences" of 50 people. (In urban areas, conferences reflect 50 families.) One conference member is elected to represent the conference at the Assembly. The other 49 members are divided into seven, 7-member committees. Based on the needs of its citizens, the conference decides on standing committees, such as health, education, housing. Citizens fill out "problem sheets" to address individual concerns. Sheets are then passed on to the representative. If the representative cannot resolve the problems, they are passed on to the executive council, which is made up of a dozen chairmen assigned to areas like employment, social services, housing.

[1] *National Association of Southern Poor. (1993). What does it take to unite people to shape their destiny and break the circle of poverty. Washington, DC: Author.*

Assembly, and their first task was to register every citizen of voting age. About 40 conferences were formed, and they sent representatives to monthly Assembly meetings.

"The Assembly brought people together who had never been together. Once you have five districts agree on one thing, you've got some power. And that's the way we took this county from the powers that be," says Pettaway, describing the election of 1971 that switched the balance of power on the Board of Supervisors when three African-Americans won seats.

"They organized the county in six months," says Anderson. "It was almost miraculous."

The Surry Assembly unveiled black distress. Representatives brought "problem sheets" to meetings enumerating the urgent needs in the county. Thousands of problem sheets poured into the D.C. office, as the power of the Assembly grew stronger. Anderson notes, "The Assembly becomes a mobilizing, lobbying force, with outreach power because it's so representational."

Changing the political base of the county allowed for other changes. County Administrator Terry D. Lewis endeavored to create jobs in the community.

One action involved converting the former white high school (which was closed earlier) to the seat of county government—a new high school was built in 1971. The county became a major employer of people of color. Lewis notes, "A lot of the housing work was undertaken by local people we employed under the CETA program. We essentially created a job training component, utilizing that funding to help some people gain skills that enabled them to become employed in the private sector, while

at the same time helping to improve the county's housing stock."

Another project brought a water system to people in the outlying areas. Later, as the economy prospered, the county administrator's office also orchestrated grants to construct the health clinic, the community center, and the new $3.6 million elementary school. In fall 1994, a $4.5 million middle school will be built.

In 1968, per capita income was $2,200, and the county employed 10 people, all white except one black janitor. In 1992, per capita income was $19,000, a figure which compares favorably to the national average of $17,600. The county now employs 80 people, mostly black. Property taxes have been raised, as has per pupil expenditure. The majority of African-American families favored the increase. Much of the increased financial base in Surry comes from the $7 million in yearly taxes the nuclear power plant (built in 1968) is assessed. That amounts to slightly more than one-half of the annual revenues collected by the county.

From the beginning, the Surry Assembly was intensely interested in education. Gammeil Poindexter is commonwealth attorney: "What the Assembly did is stress that we can make a change by electing people who support public education, and that theme was universal. The elected officials took office in January 1972, and they poured money into the school system. You had a ground swell of support for the school system.

"Over the years, that support has brought about a broader base," says Poindexter. "The schools are fairly well integrated with white kids who have come back to the public schools. Because this is the best educational system available in the county, or even the surrounding areas."

Today, the schools are 70% African-American, 30% white, reflecting the 65%-35% population. Classes within the schools are also integrated.

Superintendent C. P. Penn teases the white folk who still send their children to the private academy: "It's like having a new car sitting in your yard and hiring a cab to go everywhere. Now the car is there, and it's new—and it's going somewhere. If you want to go in the cab, it's your choice."

CP Penn chats with staff during registration week in Surry County.

The Assembly was influential in hiring Penn in 1977 to revamp Surry schools. He started with teachers. Twelve without certification were dismissed and a new group recruited. The rest were retrained through rigorous staff development. Penn ordered diagnostic and prescriptive plans for every student, and he required teachers to meet with each child's parents.

The Assembly also maintained a role. When achievement scores were low, Assembly representatives came to the School Board meeting and challenged Penn to raise them. Penn pressed for changes that would improve achievement. Perhaps the most important, with financial support of the Board, was establishing a student- teacher ratio of 17-1.

"When we had our first success, the state questioned the validity of the test," says Penn. "They said, 'This can't be. Your children are doing as well as Fairfax.' They put that on the news. It was on television; it was everywhere: Surry's Test Question. I asked the state to send in another test, and bring in their testers. And to not tell us when they were coming. They did, and our children did better on their test than they did on ours! They didn't print a retraction. But now they leave us alone. That's Surry! Surry's supposed to do well."

Today, 90% of the eligible white children enroll in the public schools. Surry schools are predominately black, Penn says. "But we are not a black school system. We serve this community. We were the first entity to come in here with an integrated face. My people have been with me 14 years. Change is slow."

But the community is behind Penn. "Most of the parents are not high school graduates. But they want their kids to have more of an opportunity than they had, so they push. They talk quietly to us. I do more superintending in this community on Saturdays and Sundays than I do during the week. At the service station, at the grocery store, at the local restaurant. You have to be amenable to talk any time, 11, 12, 1 in the morning. But in turn they give you their support, their respect, their trust. We're talking about community collaboration."

A leader of black superintendents in Virginia, Penn cheerfully boasts his accomplishments. In addition to achievement scores that rival the wealthiest communities in Virginia, more advanced high schoolers study at the prestigious William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, a ferry

hop across the James River. Surry's Jr. ROTC program is one of the few in the nation which holds the rank, "distinguished with honors." That means a student can be placed at any military academy of his or her choice solely on the basis of Penn's recommendation.

"There is one very important thing, which is to prevent the transmission of poverty to the next generation by education," muses Pettaway, now Deacon of the Lebanon Baptist Church. "What we've done in Surry means that our children are not going to come through the ghetto. They are coming through the mainstream. They have computers in kindergarten; they are being prepared for a global economy. This is a model for empowerment, what you see here."

This philosophy and most of Surry's innovations spring from Assembly meetings in Surry County. Anderson asserts that in 25 years, he never made a specific recommendation for policy, strategy, or personnel to any of the 41 Assemblies operating in the South. It is in the hands of community members to direct change.

Surry still shows remnants of its segregated past. For the most part blacks and whites still live apart, but some examples of integration can be found. The homecoming parade is integrated—even the private academy closes for the day and most of the white adults take part in the parade. Graduation is the biggest event in Surry, and every student's accomplishments are chronicled in the county yearbook. The high school graduation program lists all alumni who graduate from two and four year colleges.

Partly to provide jobs so Surry youth can remain home when they complete college, county officials are trying to attract new businesses, says County Administrator Lewis. Right now, the county is working to develop an industrial park on a recently acquired 200-acre tract of land, enhance its recreational facilities as well as its tourist industry, and further improve housing, says Lewis, "in order to make Surry attractive to its residents and to businesses seeking a place to locate."

"People wonder about a little place down in the flatlands, all woods and farms," says Pettaway. "People don't believe it can happen. If the minister and clergy are concerned about my soul, then I want them to be concerned about how I'm going to live to help my soul. To have all of the religion and don't have a job, not educated, it don't jive. So we hold the ministers responsible for saying occasionally: 'It's voting day, get out the vote.' All of us work together as a unit."

Partnerships in the urban north: Philadelphia

In West Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), has been striving to improve their surrounding community for the last eight years by working with community residents and leaders, church groups, businesses, hospitals, local developers, non-profits, other area universities, and students in collaborative projects.

Staff at Penn see student service as a way of accomplishing three important goals: contributing to local community development, improving university students' education, and improving university-community relations. We focus here on projects that assist community development.

History professors Lee Benson and Ira Harkavy, along with Sheldon Hackney, then University President, obtained a grant from United Parcel Service Foundation to launch a new youth corps in the summer of 1985 to help revitalize five neighborhoods in West Philadelphia, with 10 teens in each group.

In May, 1985, before community work began, the corps drew attention through the tragic events associated with MOVE. The bombing of the radical group's headquarters led to a fire that decimated 60 homes in West Philadelphia.

Area youth were hired for the neighborhood clean-up. The summer corps planted trees, landscaped, painted murals at a central elementary school. Residents joined the efforts. Bolstered by the enthusiastic response of neighbors, teachers, and students—and with money left over from the summer—the project expanded in the fall with elementary students assisted by middle and high schoolers. The youth corps, the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps, or WEPIC, continues today at more than 10 West Philadelphia schools.

Today's community revitalization venture is massive, some might say unwieldy. Each year, 300 agencies approach the university for volunteers. Penn's role is in securing resources and bringing in personnel. More than 6,000 University faculty, staff, and students volunteer in 150 different community-service related projects. Most projects operate under separate grants and administrations, but Penn and other organizations insist that almost all ventures start with community input and direction.

The WEPIC project operates under the aegis of the West Philadelphia Partnership, an active coalition which formed in the late 1950's. The group, which includes local community leaders, representatives from Penn, Drexel, the College of Pharmacy, three area hospitals, churches, local businesses, and non-profits is invested in revitalizing West Philadelphia.

Associate Director of WEPIC Operations, Kathryn Furano explains. "The ideal, and the idea behind the partnership is precisely to have on board those people who have a vested interest in what is happening in West Philadelphia. That's university students who are only here eight months of the year, businesses that are trying to build an economic stake in West Philadelphia, and community members who live here."

This commitment is spelled out in two WEPIC projects, described below, one at West Philadelphia High School and one at Turner Middle School, where the original idea of a youth corps continues.

Mike Connelly (top) and master carpenter Jim Dunn (bottom) show students the fine points of measurement during their first construction class.

West Philadelphia High School

Mike Connelly runs the construction program in the West Philadelphia High School Annex for WEPIC. In the first full week of classes, students sit restlessly listening to the fine points of measurement—textbook math. But, once they move to the shop, their attention is peaked. Aided by Connelly, a master carpenter, and an electrician, the students learn to measure and saw 5 3/16 inches off a 2 x 4 beam. By Christmas, this group of 24 boys will have refurbished an abandoned home on 51st Street.

Connelly, a former counselor for high school drop outs, is also concerned about community collaboration. "The essential issue becomes how do you get the community into things," explains Connelly who initiated the plan to have students build toddler play houses for four day care centers in 1992. He provided the materials and the labor, but he clearly explained that the leaders of the centers would have to reinforce the students. Connelly told them, "You have to come and ask for the playhouse, to make the kids feel they are being asked to serve the community. Then you have to come back and give them pats on the back on a frequent basis. Then you have to come to an open house and give the kids rewards and make them again feel wonderful."

As project director, Connelly, who is employed by WEPIC, is responsible for obtaining grants. This year the program is funded at $150,000 by the U.S. Department of Labor, through the Youth Opportunity Unlimited Grant, the Pennsylvania State Department of Education and the Philadelphia School District. With that money, Connelly contracted a union carpenter, will buy building materials for class and the abandoned house, and pay student apprentices who work on-site after school. To justify the grant, Connelly has to show that attendance rates, graduation rates, and job placement rates are improving, and that community revitalization is occurring.

Connelly sees this program as a way of capturing the interest of at-risk youth. "When I am out on a site and I can tell kids that if they are touching a ladder and they hit that wire, they could die. Yeah, we have their attention a little bit more. It's a much more interesting learning environment.

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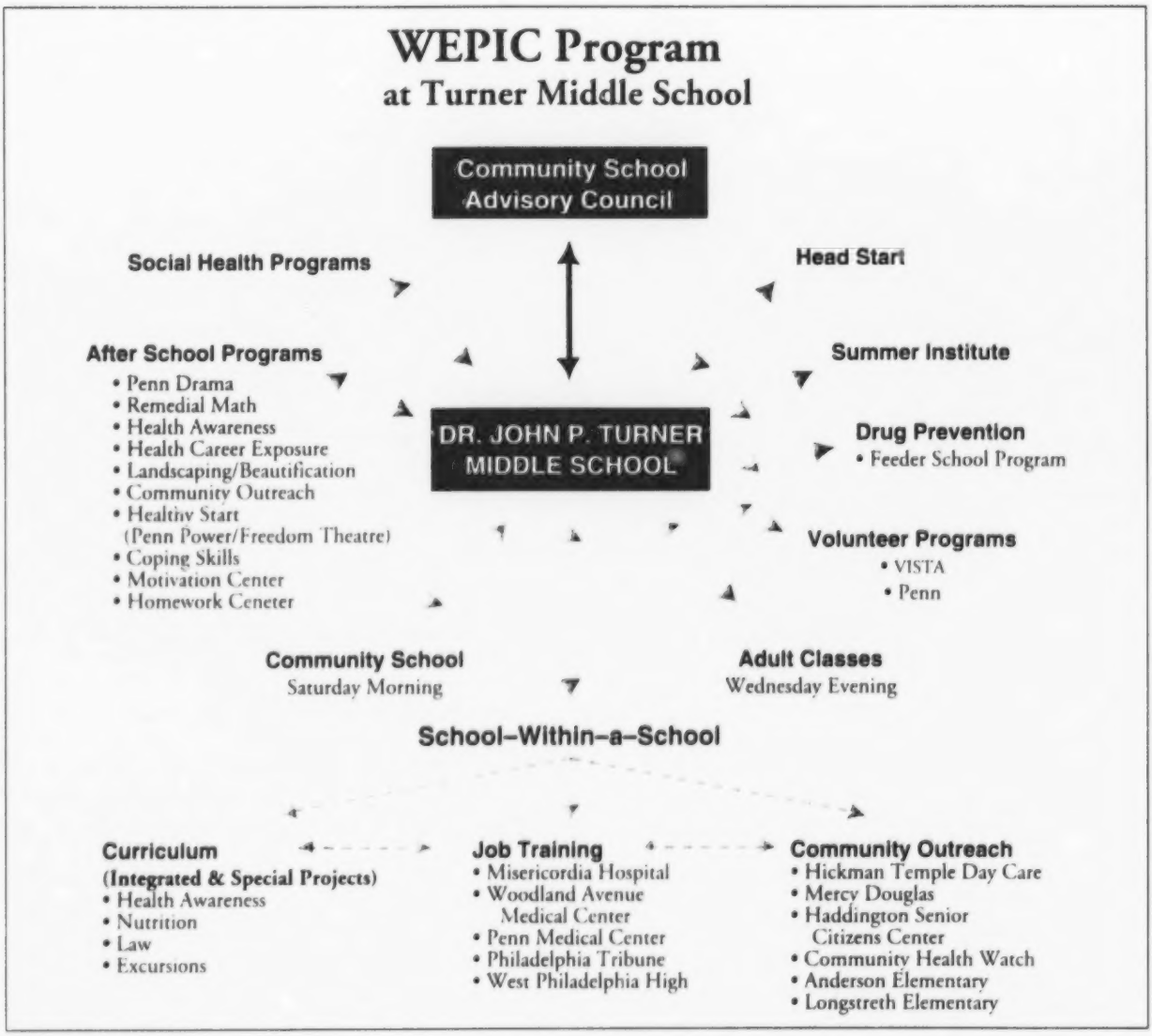

Their math is measuring a beam, and their social science is figuring out where this house fits into the whole American process."

In this case, the American process has an inner city spin. The family which will move into the house lives in a homeless shelter in the area.

Connelly emphasizes two sides to his project, an altruistic one, and a practical one. "Sure, we're trying to help people, and you are going to feel good about it. When that family moves in, it's nice. But when you look across the street and you see an abandoned house, you could say, 'I put that whole thing together on 51st. You've got $500, I got $500. The house is selling for $1,000. We can own it.' That's what I want them to do ultimately. Think how they can start. Give them hope, by not just instilling their hearts with pride, but giving them the process behind this gift. And there is a process—you can own a house for $1,000, work on it, and sell it for $30,000. And these kids can do that. And I want them to get to think that's possible too."

As part of the program, there is paid apprenticeship work after school for which students must formally apply. They fill out an application, are interviewed, need to dress appropriately, and attend school regularly. Connelly says, "It's a means of experiential learning. Once they do it, they get paid. And we give out the checks in the classroom—not a big public display. The kids then say, 'I'm going to try that.' Last year we started with two kids, ended up with a dozen. We tell kids, 'If you're absent that day, you can't work that day. Say 'f.u.' to the teacher that day, can't work that day.' "

Hands-on learning, practical applications, learning by doing, these hallmarks of innovative educational

programs provide a framework for this program. Connelly sees his program as an agent for community change, "It's a vehicle for two things: 1) to get the school out in the community—we don't make birdhouses, we rehab houses; and 2) to get the community into the school."

Turner Middle School

At Turner Middle School, area residents have had significant impact in determining what programs the school offers. In an area where the majority of students live at or below the poverty line, they targeted health as a central issue.

The WEPIC effort at Turner middle school embraces 18 separate projects, such as Head Start, adult classes, drug prevention workshops, summer institutes (see sidebar). One venture uses seventh grade middle school students to tutor fifth graders, who attend the feeder elementary school, about nutrition.

Majeedah Drayton, is one such seventh grade tutor. Her four students tell her they would not change their eating habits for their parents or their adult teachers, but for her, a 13-year-old peer tutor, they'll try giving up chips and soda in lieu of veggies and milk.

Her students aren't the only ones who have changed. Two years ago, Majeedah would often feign sleep when her mother tried to wake her for school. She was bored. Her mother would plead, "You need an education." Majeedah says, "And I was like, I don't want one."

Now Majeedah relishes the hands-on opportunities in the WEPIC program, like visiting hospitals, making videos, writing newsletters. The middle school students are tutored in turn by retired adults who work as VISTA volunteers.

"This program gives these children a chance. WEPIC is a blessing," says volunteer leader Eva Hammond. "I just think it is the best thing that could have happened to southwest Philly. We all live here, and we enjoy seeing where the growth is at. Not only just in school, but we see where it is developing in the community."

Majeedah Drayton, eighth grade student at Turner Middle School, explains WEPIC'S program called "Children Teaching Children."

The programs at Turner have spawned community revitalization. Since initial beautification projects removed graffiti and cleaned up the building, community residents continue to improve Turner. Some volunteer to clean the building; some come to use the gym or the pool. Some teach for the Saturday morning enrichment classes or the Wednesday evening adult classes, which draw more than 300 residents from the Turner community. Some residents help run the extra-curricular programs, and some positions are paid. Some programs, like health screening, is administered at the school. The screening is not just for students, but for siblings, families, and all community members.

While many cities offer programs for low-income neighborhoods, the Penn-community collaboration increasingly promotes initiative within the local neighborhoods. Not only do Turner residents meet with WEPIC staff, church representatives, and parents of school children once a month, but a few community-run groups have formed. One, which uses Turner for monthly meetings of 15-20 residents, has converted an abandoned building, rerouted trucks carrying chemicals, and addressed safety issues and senior citizen concerns. Last summer, the group's organizers received a grant to create a drug-free program in the community, funded by the Philadelphia School District. The grant duplicated the ideas of a previous WEPIC grant. But this time, a group of community leaders wrote the grant and ran the program themselves.

There are other community revitalization efforts. Residents continue to beautify schools. One resident formed 20 basketball leagues which play out of 3 school gyms. There are block meetings, parents have banded together to provide baby sitting, and to watch children on Saturday so parents can take classes or run errands.

Harkavy feels there is movement toward revitalization. "The school is increasingly seen as a neighborhood center with enough mechanisms to have real democratic voices from all participants." But there are no hard statistics. "I heard the Turner kids did very well relative to other schools in the rest of the city, and that there was real academic improvement among that group.

But if you ask, are we—is WEPIC—solving those problems, I'd say not yet. If you press me and ask, are we ahead of the curve of deterioration? I don't know. To get ahead of that curve, we would need a massive engagement of not just the school, but all the institutions and particularly the higher eds. And we're not there yet. We need a lot more."

Karen Prager is Dissemination Coordinator at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools

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CENTER MISSION

The Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools studies how organizational features of schools can be changed to increase the intellectual and social competence of students. The five-year program of research focuses on restructuring in four areas: the experiences of students in school; the professional life of teachers; the governance, management and leadership of schools; and the coordination of community resources to better serve educationally disadvantaged students.

Through syntheses of previous research, analyses of existing data, and new empirical studies of education reform, the Center focuses on six critical issues for elementary, middle and high schools: How can schooling nurture authentic forms of student achievement? How can schooling enhance educational equity? How can decentralization and local empowerment be constructively developed? How can schools be transformed into communities of learning? How can change be approached through thoughtful dialogue and support rather than coercion and regulation? How can the focus on student outcomes be shaped to serve these five principles?

CENTER PUBLICATIONS

In the fall and spring of each year, the Center publishes a newsletter, ***Issues in Restructuring Schools***, which offers analyses of substantive issues. In addition, three ***Briefs*** targeted to special audiences will be offered yearly, and our ***1993 Bibliography on School Restructuring*** currently available, will be updated each year. Occasional papers will be available at cost. To be placed on the mailing list, please contact: Karen Prager, Dissemination Coordinator, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. Telephone: (608) 263-7575.

FOR FURTHER READING

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